

News Breakfast (2019), Ep 248, 12 December 2019

07:10:09 Nate. Now, the past 12 months have
07:10:11 certainly been eventful in US
07:10:13 politics - that's an understatement
07:10:14 - and it is not slowing down. The
07:10:17 new year is expected to start with
07:10:17 the expected Senate impeachment
07:10:19 trial of Donald Trump ahead of
07:10:21 what's expected to be a keenly
07:10:21 fought 2020 presidential election.
07:10:25 Tensions with China also loom large
07:10:26 with Australia seemingly caught in
07:10:28 the middle. Well, joining us with
07:10:31 his assessment of the year gone, and
07:10:35 the one ahead, is US Ambassador to
07:10:36 Australia, A.B. Culvahouse Junior.
07:10:38 Ambassador, good morning. Welcome to
07:10:41 Breakfast. Lisa, Michael, nice to be
07:10:43 here. Nice to update your viewers on
07:10:44 the great alliance between the
07:10:45 United States and Australia. I want
07:10:47 to talk about the golf a little bit
07:10:51 later... OK. ..but I want to start
07:10:52 with your concerns about what's
07:10:55 going on in Australia with
07:10:57 harassment of the Uighur community.
07:11:00 What is happening? What is happening
07:11:02 and it's unacceptable is that Uighur
07:11:03 who are lawfully in Australia, who
07:11:07 are raised in Australia, working,
07:11:09 paying taxes in Australia are being

07:11:10 harassed by agents of a foreign
07:11:13 power. They're being monitored.
07:11:16 There's police cars, fake police
07:11:19 cars that are with Chinese police
07:11:20 logos parked outside their
07:11:28 residences. They're being profiled
07:11:30 in Xinjiang back in China are being
07:11:32 punished for any time they express
07:11:33 their concerns about how their
07:11:36 community is being treated, and as a
07:11:41 freedom-loving democracy, we are
07:11:44 outraged. When you say "foreign
07:11:45 power", you clearly mean the Chinese
07:11:47 governments... Yes, indeed. And the
07:11:49 government itself? Acts of the
07:11:51 government, yes. How aggressive
07:11:52 should the Australian Government
07:11:55 then be in pushing back? I - I've -
07:11:58 the way - the best way to analyse
07:12:00 it, let's say that the United States
07:12:05 - and we would never do this - if we
07:12:08 were following American's lawfully
07:12:11 raised in Australia around and
07:12:14 monitoring their activities, and
07:12:16 taking actions against their
07:12:18 relatives back in the states for
07:12:22 anything they might say against our
07:12:24 President, against our government,
07:12:26 people would be lawfully outraged.
07:12:28 They would want my head on a stick.
07:12:30 There should be serious

07:12:32 consequences. I would say that
07:12:34 Foreign Minister Payne has expressed
07:12:42 her deep concern about to - to the
07:12:43 Consul-General in Brisbane who was
07:12:44 encouraging Chinese students at the
07:12:47 University of Queensland to harass
07:12:49 pro-Hong Kong students who were
07:12:50 demonstrating in favour of democracy
07:12:52 in Hong Kong. When you first joined
07:12:55 us, I think not long after you took
07:12:57 up the posts in May this year,
07:13:01 Ambassador... Yes. ..we asked you
07:13:03 the obvious question about
07:13:04 representing possibly the most
07:13:06 controversial President in history
07:13:09 and you made reference to the tweets
07:13:12 as background noise. Which you asked
07:13:15 all of us our viewers to ignore. But
07:13:18 since you've come on, those
07:13:22 background noise have increased in
07:13:23 volume. They are very controversial.
07:13:26 How hard does that make your job in
07:13:29 this country as your official
07:13:29 representative of Donald Trump? It
07:13:31 is a form of political discourse.
07:13:33 Donald Trump is a disruptor. He
07:13:37 tends to crowd source his policy. He
07:13:42 - it's open and sometimes overnight
07:13:44 debate about what we do when - in
07:13:46 dealing with the Australian
07:13:47 Government, and the Australian

07:13:48 public say, "Look at our policies,
07:13:52 look at our stated policies"... And
07:13:55 ignore the tweets? Take the tweets
07:13:57 into consequence but don't assume
07:13:59 that they're firm policy because it
07:14:00 is evolving. It is open discourse.
07:14:04 The fact that he's facing
07:14:05 impeachment proceedings though has
07:14:07 got to be a distraction? It has got
07:14:09 to be a distraction for the
07:14:11 relationship between Australia and
07:14:12 the US? What do you think
07:14:14 Australians should make of what's
07:14:16 going on? I think that Australians
07:14:18 must understand that impeachment is
07:14:22 a process that specifically
07:14:24 contemplated -- is specifically
07:14:28 contemplated in our Constitution. In
07:14:32 modern times, I guess I'm dating
07:14:37 myself, I worked on the Senate
07:14:42 committee in the Watergate
07:14:44 investigation, for President Nixon.
07:14:47 Of course I was there for the
07:14:49 Clinton years where Clinton was
07:14:50 impeached by the House of
07:14:51 Representatives but acquitted by the
07:14:53 Senate. It is a process contemplated
07:14:55 by our Constitution. Most personally
07:14:56 we have demonstrated over the course
07:14:59 of all of those episodes that the US
07:15:02 Government will continue to focus,

07:15:04 will continue to operate, will
07:15:06 continue to function and most
07:15:08 importantly, here in Australia, will
07:15:09 continue to honour our alliance
07:15:10 commitments to the Commonwealth of
07:15:12 Australia. Does he get on the phone
07:15:16 often... No. ..from any calls from
07:15:18 the President? Which is not a bad
07:15:22 thing I guess. No, he was visit for
07:15:25 the State visit with Prime Minister
07:15:32 Morrison Had a good visit in the
07:15:34 oval Office. Then I was out in Ohio
07:15:38 for the opening of the Pratt
07:15:42 factory. You have grown up in Ohio.
07:15:45 Yes. You've seen what's happening
07:15:48 here with the bushfires and the
07:15:50 drought with farmers. The US is
07:15:51 withdrawing from the Paris
07:15:54 agreements. We have pressure on the
07:15:56 Australian Government. Do countries
07:15:57 like America, governments in
07:15:58 Australia and America, need to be
07:16:01 doing more? First, our hearts go out
07:16:03 to the farmers and the victims of
07:16:06 the bushfires and, indeed, we have -
07:16:09 we've seen assistance over, I think
07:16:12 21 highly expert firefighters have
07:16:17 arrived in New South Wales. We also
07:16:20 have one of our state-of-the-art
07:16:22 planes... And that's certainly
07:16:23 appreciated but people as we've seen

07:16:26 are messaging us, sending emails to
07:16:27 newspapers, they want concrete
07:16:29 leadership and action from the
07:16:31 countries. But the Paris Accords,
07:16:33 Lisa, are not the acid test of how
07:16:35 one is responding to climate change.
07:16:37 If you look at what the United
07:16:40 States has done, since 2005 we've
07:16:43 reduced our carbon footprint, our
07:16:45 carbon emissions footprint by 14%.
07:16:47 At the same time our economy has
07:16:50 grown 19%, and that's being done
07:16:52 through innovation, through
07:16:56 technological change and through the
07:17:01 forces of the market economy. The
07:17:03 Paris Accords in the judgement of
07:17:05 the United States Government operate
07:17:09 to the detriment of American workers
07:17:11 and American businesses and
07:17:12 undermine our national security.
07:17:23 That's why we're withdrawing. You're
07:17:25 here for the golf tournament.
07:17:25 (LAUGHS)
07:17:34 Tiger who? Maybe make a wager? No,
07:17:38 last-minute visit? I considered the
07:17:39 Prime Minister's invitation, had
07:17:41 careful attention to it but this is
07:17:44 a tough time of year... He has a few
07:17:46 other things going on. Thank you for
07:17:51 coming in. Thank you.